

THE GIRLS

there can be no existence with these dogs dragging these blue bones, the flowers all bend left in the wind and look tired and the phone rings, it's Pauline down at Ye Ol' Stagger Inn:

"I'd like to see you, Hank"

it's one thirty p.m. and I drive down to Hollywood and Cherokee and walk in and Pauline is sitting with Alta and Alta flashes me the big false smile and Pauline just sits looking down into her marguerita.

they are both drinking margueritas.

I sit down next to Pauline.

"what is it?"

"some asshole's been bugging me, so I thought if you came by you'd get him off me."

Alta bends her head down around Pauline and flashes me another false heavy lipstick smile.

"how ya doin', Hank?"

"look," I say to Pauline, "I never saw a guy yet you couldn't drive off."

"you just don't know," she says.

I get a whisky and soda from the barkeep.

Hollywood at one thirty five p.m. is a big tomb full of stink bombs.

"I'm going back to Cleveland," says Alta, "I'm going to get straight ... hey, ya got a cigarette?"

I push the pack down to her.

Pauline just sits there, nobody says anything at all. I finish my drink, stand up and dig out a tip for the barkeep:

"well, girls, I got to be going"

"wait a minute, Hank," says Pauline.

"what is it?"

"I want you to pay for our drinks, we've had 8 or 9 drinks and a bowl of chili apiece"

"how about a little song on the juke box instead?"

"Hank, we don't have any money"

"you'd be surprised how many people there are in the world like that"

"the bill is \$18.50 and I only have \$9."

"here," I say and I drop a dollar bill out of my wallet in front of her.

as I walk out of there I hear Alta say, "don't be pissed, Hank"

I get to my car, get in and drive off and I turn the radio on and can't hear a thing, then I remember I have been in a car wash and I reach outside and pull the aerial up and the radio begins to play.

you know, there can be no chance when the cobra sleeps under your pillow, and there can be no mercy when the only mercy is yours -- I have slept in the alleys

of the world and never begged a dime, and the trouble with whores who have no taste for their work, they ought to get on as waitresses at Norm's.

I pull up outside my liquor store and go in for some decency.

THEY CAN RUIN YOUR DAY

I parked the BMW and went in to get some papers xeroxed.

I watched the white sheets of paper jump out of the machine in order.

it was a warm and an easy day.

I clipped the papers together

paid the clerk and walked out on the street again.

and here he came in seaman's cap

blue work shirt and pants rolled too high.

there were others but he walked right up to me grabbed my hand and began shaking it:

"hey, buddy, urgworg buddy lapu ssot udorob

I am your brother sag llah worg"

"you're breaking my hand," I told him.

I reached into my pocket and gave him a quarter.

"worgssarg buddy ssamniknat, you yremaerc"

I walked on but he shouted after me: "ecin wolly yemttrid ereth"

I never liked such a situation because I felt like a fool if I gave them the money and I felt like a bastard if I didn't.

and no matter what I did or didn't do it just didn't go away for a while.

I walked to my car unlocked it

got in and sat there.

some girls were coming out of a cafe after lunch.

they were going back to work

a whole group of them chatting and walking along

and I stared hard at their breasts and their legs and their behinds

but it didn't help:

the girls were all quite homely and sexless.

I started the car and drove down 6th to Pacific.

I crossed Pacific and went all the way to Gaffey

and it wasn't until I turned off of Gaffey and